# EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

*EUCOM*

*SCHOOL HOME PARTNERSHIP CONFERENCE*

January 2001

Frank X. O'Gara

Italy DSO

# Objectives

- ✔ Discuss ways to build a knowledge base about schools and DoDDS
- ✔ Examine and analyze effective communication practices to build and enhance partnerships
- ✔ Examine tools and strategies for communicating effectively
- ✔ Build capacity to link the school, home, community and command for successful student achievement

Communication is a process, not a product.  It's not enough that your publics know something.  It's what they do with that knowledge that counts.

**~ Jennifer Grossman, NSPRA**

## *Our Challenge and Commitment…*

*People assigned to Army/Navy/Air Force commands need to know right away that they did the right thing in bringing their families with them to Europe.*

# Effective Communicators Need a Knowledge Base

American Education

DoDEA

DoDDS

Local School

# SCHOOLS CANNOT DO THIS ALONE

America's public schools can be traced back to the year 1647. The Massachusetts Puritans established schools to:

1. teach basic reading, writing, and arithmetic skills, and
2. cultivate values that serve a democratic society (some history and civics implied).

# From 1890 to 1910, we added:

- nutrition,
- immunization, and
- health to the list of school responsibilities.

# From 1920 to 1940, we added:

- vocational education,
- the practical arts,
- business education,
- speech and drama,
- half day kindergarten,
- physical education  including organized athletics, and
- school lunch programs. (We take this for granted today.  It was, however; a significant step to shift to the schools the job of feeding America's children 1/3 of their daily meals.)

# In the 1950's, we added:

- safety education,
- driver's education,
- expanded music and art education,
- foreign language requirements are strengthened, and
- sex education introduced (topics escalate through 1990's).

# In the 1970's, the breakup of the American family accelerated, and added:

- special education (mandated by federal government),
- Title IX programs (greatly expanded athletic programs for girls),
- drug and alcohol abuse education,
- behavior adjustment classes,
- character education,
- environmental education, and
- school breakfast programs appear. (Now, some schools are feeding America's children 2/3 of their daily meals.

# In the 1980's, the floodgates open...

- keyboarding and computer education,
- global education,
- ethnic education,
- multicultural/non-sexist education,
- English-as-a-second-language, and bilingual education,
- early childhood education,
- Jump Start, Early Start, Even Start, and Prime Start,
- full day kindergarten,
- pre-school programs for children at-risk,
- after school programs for children of working parents,
- alternative education in all its forms,
- stranger/danger education,
- sexual abuse prevention education,
- health and psychological services are expanded, and
- child abuse monitoring becomes a legal requirement for all teachers

# Finally, in the 1990's, we have added:

- HIV/AIDS education,
- death education,
- expanded computer and Internet education,
- inclusion,
- Tech Prep and school to work programs,
- gang education (in urban centers),
- bus safety education,
- bicycle safety education, and
- gun safety education.

**And in most states we have not added a single minute to the school calendar in five decades!**

- **All of the items added to the list have merit, and all have their ardent supporters. They cannot, however; all be assigned to the schools.**

- **The people of each community must come together to answer two essential questions:**
  - ✔ **what do they want their children to know and be able to do when they graduate, and**
  - ✔ **how can the entire community be organized to ensure that all children reach the goals of the school system?**

# THE BOTTOM LINE:

**Schools cannot do it all.**

**Partnerships**
**Communication**
**Involvement**

# KNOWLEDGE BASE
# DoDEA/DoDDS

**You can’t do your job or be a partner unless you know something about us**.

# Sources of Information

## Publications/Videos

- Staff Handbooks
- Program of studies guide
- Information Packet
- Annual Report
- Budget
- Brochures on Specific Programs
- DoDEA Videos

# The WEB

- www.odedodea.edu
  - Strategic plan
  - School Profiles
  - Regulations
  - Assessment data
  - Staffing Information
- www.dodds-e.odedodea.edu
- www.eucom.mil

# Local Experts

- ✔ Principals
- ✔ Teachers
- ✔ Key Communicators
- ✔ SAC Members
- ✔ Schools Officers
- ✔ District Office Staff

# SAC MEETING FOCUS TOPICS

- ✔ Strategic Plan
  - ✔ Benchmarks
  - ✔ School Based Priorities (SIP)
  - ✔ Accountability Reports
    - ✔ DoDEA
    - ✔ Area
    - ✔ District
    - ✔ School (including spring test data)
- ✔ Curriculum/Standards Updates
- ✔ Manpower Voucher
- ✔ Budget Update
- ✔ Discipline Plan/Discipline Committee/Zero Tolerance (DoDEA Reg. 2051.1)
- ✔ Communication Modes Planned to Inform Parents
  - ✔ Focus on Customer Service
  - ✔ Exit Surveys
  - ✔ Chain of Command/Organizational Structure

# The Art of Communicating
# How Should It Look in DoDDS?

- ✔ Quality service/doing a good job
- ✔ Ask, don't tell (find out what the various "audiences" think about DoDDS)
- ✔ Listen
- ✔ Let go of need to control
- ✔ Become an expert consultant (providing them what they need to know)
- ✔ Play a supportive role in what your staff and community want to achieve
- ✔ Practice honesty, accuracy, fairness, and courtesy
- ✔ Stop selling
- ✔ Provide choices
- ✔ Speak plain English

**Source: NSPRA**

# The Art of Communicating Is Not ...

- ✔ a cover-up for problems
- ✔ advertising
- ✔ a plan to only tell the “good things”
- ✔ a job for only one person in a school district

**COMMUNICATIONS AND SCHOOL/COMMUNITY RELATIONS IS EVERYONE’S JOB**

Source: National School Public Relations Association (NSPRA)

# Why Communicate?

## TRADITIONAL REASONS

- Demonstrate leadership
- Build positive image, do “PR”
- Need to be accountable
- Need to grasp public opinion
- Serve Superintendent/School System

# Why Communicate?

## BETTER REASONS

- Increase student achievement
- Ensure a safe school environment
- Increase resources, involvement
- Gain acceptance of change
- Cost of failure is too high
  - Stifles reform, improvements
  - Focus on wrong issues

# Why Communicate?

## MORE REASONS

- To build credibility and public understanding

*You don't win support keeping good things secret*

- To build stronger links between school and home as well as school and community

- To close the gap between parent school experiences and education today

# Why Communicate Strategically?

- Communication happens
- Hit the right target with the right message for
  the right purpose
- Doing the right thing isn't enough -- we have
  to tell people about it

# Historically, schools have not invested in communications

- Proctor & Gamble, 35%
- Service industry, 15%
- Education, less than .1 of 1%

*People tell us to run schools more like a business…*

# Where Public Gets Education News?

- Parents
  - From their children
  - From their school
    - Teachers, principals
    - Support Staff

- Non-parents
  - From the media
  - From students, adults/friends, workplace

# Benefits of a Communications Plan

- ✔ Planning is proactive.  It helps you avoid reacting.
- ✔ Planning helps you anticipate challenges and plan alternatives
- ✔ Planning raises the management status, visibility, credibility, and support of the PR function.
- ✔ Plans ties your communications goals to district goals.
- ✔ Planning leads to greater credibility.
- ✔ Planning gives the PR function a green light to proceed on a specific course and keeps the PR program on track

**Source:  NSPRA**

# Identifying communication strengths and limitations

- ✔ Conduct a mini communications audit
- ✔ What communication efforts are working?
- ✔ Where am I missing the mark?
- ✔ Am I reaching all of my publics?
- ✔ Am I targeting my messages?

Brainstorming Activity

Source: Brian Woodland

# What Does the Customer Want?

- ✔ Tough standards and high expectations
- ✔ a safe and caring learning environment
- ✔ a strong, basic academic program, complemented by technology and other 21st century staples
- ✔ an educational program that prepares students for success in the world of work and life in general
- ✔ a customer-friendly atmosphere that invites and values parents involvement
- ✔ a well-trained staff of educators and support personnel that puts children first
- ✔ adequate financial support to offer them what they want and need

**Source: NSPRA**

## What Does the Customer Want To Know? The 10 Most Important Questions About a School

1. What is the classroom-to-student ration?

2. Does the school have a well-equipped and well-used
   library or media center?

3. Is the reading program effective?

4. How are computers used for instruction?

5. What is the school's disciplinary policy?

## What Does the Customer Want To Know? The 10 Most Important Questions About a School

6. What is the teaching philosophy? (Lecturing, group, individual, team?)

7. Do professional specialists support the school program?

8. How is student progress reported? (Grading, practices, portfolios)

9. How often are standards, textbooks and classroom materials reviewed and updated?

# The Five Most Critical Things Customers/Parents Observe in Schools

1. Do students appear actively involved in learning?

2. Do teachers appear to manage classroom discipline
   effectively?

3. Is students' work prominently displayed in classrooms
   and hallways?

4. Are parents and others warmly welcomed as visitors?

# Hierarchy of effective communication

- ✔ One-to-one/face-to-face
- ✔ Small group meetings
- ✔ Speaking before a large group
- ✔ Phone conversations
- ✔ Handwritten, personal notes
- ✔ Typed-written personal notes
- ✔ Computer generated personal letters
- ✔ Mass produced non-personal letter
- ✔ Brochures
- ✔ Articles in newsletters
- ✔ News in press

# Planning for improved communication

- ✔ Set goals based on strengths and limitations
- ✔ Establish priorities
- ✔ Target your audience and message
- ✔ Reach out to diverse community groups
- ✔ Find information sources
- ✔ Find community leaders
- ✔ Network
- ✔ Evaluate the effectiveness of your communication

# Effective Communications The Players...

- ✔ Internal Communicators
  - ✔ School Employees
- ✔ External Communicators
  - ✔ Schools Officers
  - ✔ Commanders and Senior NCOs
  - ✔ Key Communicators
  - ✔ Advisory Committee Members

# Internal Communication

## It's the Spoke in the Hub

School employees are the best investment you can make in your communications efforts. Involve them, train them, inform them, and you will be rewarded by having developed a cadre who will speak accurately and firsthand about the schools where they work. They are your frontline communicators.

**Source: NSPRA**

# Expanding the School Circle

- ✔ Expanding the circle of educational responsibility to include groups and organizations outside the school
- ✔ Redefine the concept of “we”
- ✔ “We” is now the home, school, and community working together
- ✔ Answer is not simple to divvy up the responsibilities
- ✔ Need involvement and support of command officials and key communicators

## *"When you enlist the support of commanders/ NCOs…"*

## *OPPORTUNITIES FOR SUPPORT/COLLABORATION*

- zero tolerance for weapons
- school and bus discipline policies
- School Home Partnership and parental involvement initiatives
- military unit sponsor for each school
- parent participation in conferences and other forums
  - Educator Days, Parent Academies, etc.
- mentoring programs
- force protection/security initiatives
- logistical support and coordination

# Key Communicators…Promoting Effective School – Home Relations

- ✔ Find out where parents are
- ✔ Find out what they feel their needs are and respond to them
- ✔ Remember that not all parents are joiners but most care deeply about their child’s education

Source: Brian Woodland

# WEB SITES

A www site functions as a 24-hour-a-day, 365-day-per-year communications tool for your school/district literally to the entire world.

***Use it to improve customer service***

# Publications

## Why the Need?

**Publications reinforce information you are trying to relay. In some instances, it may be your only chance to get your message out front. At any rate, publications are the image of your organization. They reflect your organization's values, mission, and goals. And, they provide tangible evidence of your school system's communications program.**

**Source: NSPRA**

**The right message**
**to**
**the right people**
**through**
**the right media**
**at**
**the right time**

**Action!**

**~ Dee Sharpe**

# Issues Management

## Why?

- Keeps you in touch with the issues of the season
- Helps you to be proactive in your communications efforts…puts you in the forefront
- Helps you to anticipate possible issues in your community
- Positions you in the community/district as a counselor as well as a communicator
- Demonstrates your ability to be a leader in issues affecting education

**Source: NSPRA**

# Real Dialogue:  What Is It?

- ✔ People discuss, argue, confront, explore, and think-out-loud-together
- ✔ Differences brought to the surface and closely examined
- ✔ Common ground sought
- ✔ People reflect on what is happening as it s happening

**Source:  NSPRA**

When one has no stake in the way things are, when one's needs or opinions are provided no forum, when one sees oneself as the object of unilateral actions, it takes no particular wisdom to suggest that one would rather be elsewhere.

**~ Seymour Sarason**

**"The Predictable Failure of Educational Reform," 1990**

# One Way Communication -Engagement

- ✔ Communicate to……
- ✔ Public hearing……..
- ✔ Talk to, tell……..
- ✔ Information out……..
- ✔ Seeking to establish/protect turf
- ✔ Authority……..
- ✔ Influencing the like-minded……..

- ✔ Deliberate with
- ✔ Community conversation
- ✔ Talk with, share
- ✔ Information around
- ✔ Seeking and finding common ground
- ✔ Responsibility
- ✔ Understanding those not like-minded

Source: Kathy Leslie, APR (NSPRA 2000)

# One Way Communication – Engagement

- ✔ Top Down……
- ✔ Establishing a hierarchy for decision making……
- ✔ Goals, strategic plan….
- ✔ Products……
- ✔ Public Relations……

- ✔ Bottom up
- ✔ Building a network of stakeholders
- ✔ Values/vision
- ✔ Process
- ✔ Public Engagement

Annenburg Institute

Source: Kathy Leslie, APR (NSPRA 2000)

# Involve/Listen to your Community

- ✔ Surveys
- ✔ Forums
- ✔ Special phone lines
- ✔ Opportunities for input
- ✔ Hearings

Source:  Gay Campbell, APR (NSPRA 2000)

# Ask for feedback from parents and other audiences about your communication tools...

- ✔ Do you find these materials helpful?
- ✔ What has been the most helpful?
- ✔ What else would you like to have?

*It's crucial to give people a way to ask a question, make a comment, or respond to your communication in some way.*

# YOUR VIEWS ARE WELCOMED

**DoDDS continually strives to improve its educational services. If you have questions or comments about a school-related issue, we encourage you to complete this form. Be assured that DoDDS will review your comments and send a reply.**

**Complete this form making sure to include all information requested. Please make sure to include your name, phone number and mailing and email address for additional information and follow-up purposes.**

- **After completion, please fold and drop this self-addressed form in the mail.**

- **Within two weeks, you should receive a phone call or letter. If you do not receive a call or letter, please contact the District Superintendent's Office at 634-8460 or email at ital_supt_dso@eu.odedodea.edu.**

**The comment form is also available on our web site:**

**NAME:_____PHONE #_____**

**ADDRESS:_____**

**SCHOOL_____DODEA PERSONNEL_____**

**COMMENTS:**

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

# Effective Communications

## A Key Aspect...

## Building and Maintaining Positive Relationships

# The 10 Commandments of Human Relations

1. Speak to people. There is nothing as nice as a cheerful word of greeting.
2. Smile at people. It takes 72 muscles to frown; 14 to smile.
3. Call people by name. The sweetest music is the sound of one's own name.
4. Be friendly and helpful.
5. Be cordial.
6. Be genuinely interested in people. You can like everybody if you try.
7. Be generous with praise ~ cautious with criticism.
8. Be considerate of the feelings of others. It will be appreciated.
9. Be thoughtful of the opinion of others.
10. Be alert to give service. What counts most in life is what we do for others.

I like to think that the greatest success of any life is that moment when a teacher touches a child's heart and it is never again the same . . . Everything America is or ever hopes to be depends upon what happens in our school's classrooms.

# “Getting Along…Words of Encouragement”

Cross-Cultural Communications

4585 48th St., San Diego, CA 92115

Phone 800-858-4478 or 691-583-4478

Fax 619-583-0304 e-mail STPhD@Thiederman.com

Frank X. O'Gara
Assistant Superintendent
Italy DSO
DSN 634-8460
Civ (0039) 0444-518460
o'garaf@eu.odedodea.edu

*Students First in the 21st*